

FREDERICK CROMER HOUSE  
1053 NINTH STREET  
DES MOINES  
POLK COUNTY  
IOWA

HABS No. IA-135

HABS  
IOWA,  
77-DESMO,  
16-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL and ENGINEERING RECORD  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20243

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Frederick Cromer House

HABS No. IA-135

Location: 1053 Ninth Street  
Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

Present Owner: City of Des Moines, Iowa  
East 1st & Locust Street  
Des Moines, Iowa

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Residence, to be moved or demolished by the spring of 1982.

Significance: Brick Italianate, single family home, Victorian Period, a remaining example from a once viable neighborhood.

PART I, HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: Circa 1890. The address first appears in City Directory 1890-91.

2. Architect: Unknown.

3. Original and subsequent owners.

1877 Deed, 11-8-1877, recorded in book 63, page 40. A. Y. Rawson and M. L. Rawson to Frederic Cromer.

1911 Deed, 1-30-1911, recorded in book 590, page 292. Emma C. Cromer (widow of F. Cromer) to G. H. Sherman.

1912 Deed, 8-19-1912, recorded in book 614, page 4. G. H. Sherman and Florence Sherman to Henry Neeson.

1940 Deed, 11-4-40, recorded in book 1566, page 530. Fannie Neeson (widow of Henry Neeson) to Harry Neeson.

1961 Deed, May 1961, recorded in book 2579, page 91. Gladys G. Neeson (widow of Harry Neeson) to Earl W. Robinson and Jewell Robinson.

1972 Deed, 4-28-72, book 3326, page 335. Earl W. Robinson and Jewell Robinson to Lorenzo H. Duke.

1981 Deed, 9-1-81, book 5131, page 550. Lorenzo Duke, Jr. et al to City of Des Moines, Iowa.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Unknown.
5. Original plans and construction: None.
6. Alterations and additions

South bay window removed, date uncertain.

Shed attached to rear of structure, date unknown.

#### B. Historical Context

The Cromer house is located just north of the present downtown. Russell and Harlan's addition, the subdivision in which the Cromer house is located, was platted in the 1800's. Generally, City growth was moving from the south to the north at this time. Ninth Street was a street car route and this may be the reason that larger homes developed on Ninth Street while only a block away cottages were the rule.

It is believed that Frederick Cromer built the house at 1053 Ninth Street in 1890 as this is the first time the address appears in the City Directory. Cromer was an express messenger for various railroad companies. After Cromer's death his wife sold the property to G. H. Sherman. Sherman was a manager for H. S. Chase & Company, a retail and wholesale grocery operation in Des Moines that had a number of outlets. Sherman was listed as a resident at 1053 Ninth Street for one year. In 1912 he sold the house to Henry Neeson. Henry rented the house for several years to M. C. Wallace, a salesman. By 1920 Henry had moved into the house. In 1940 Henry's widow Fannie sold the house to Harry Neeson who is believed to be a brother. Fannie continued to reside at 1053 Ninth until 1943 and Harry moved in in 1944.

In 1953 Gladys Neeson, (widow of Harry) sold the property on contract to Earl W. and Jewell Robinson. The Robinsons obtained a deed in 1961. Earl was a clerk for the Veteran's Administration. In 1972, the Robinsons sold the property to Lorenzo H. Duke, a trucker. In 1981 when the City bought the house it was in the estate of Mr. Duke.

Over the years a number of changes took place in the neighborhood. As the area aged, deterioration began to make itself felt. During the 1960's I-235 was built, destroying many of the neighborhood homes. In the 1970's a high-rise hotel was built two blocks away. The surrounding area suffered from the demolition of existing houses. Across the street new housing was built as part of an urban renewal project substantially altering the character of the area.

## PART II, ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: The Cromer House is a good remaining example of a two story brick structure with Italinate detailing. Condition is fair to deteriorating.

B. Description of the exterior

1. Overall dimensions: 54.5' x 24'.
2. Foundations: Stone
3. Walls: Brick, reddish orange modular brick laid in a running bond.
4. Structural system: Masonary bearing wall.
5. Porches: Front porches not original, as it interferes with 1st floor lintels. Date of alteration unknown.
6. Chimneys: One brick chimney.
7. Openings: A wheel window on the front and long narrow windows, beginning at floor level with foliated designs on straight-sided stone arches are the most distinctive features. Front door enters into hallway and rear door into kitchen.
8. Roof: Simple gable roof, decorative brackets, composition shingle.

C. Description of Interior  
(See floor plans).

Flooring is hardwood and walls and ceiling are plaster covered masonry walls or plaster and lath.

There is no complex detailing.

Mechanical equipment is modern.

D. Site:

The Cromer House sits on a hill north of the downtown. It faces west and is one of a number of larger two story homes which lined Ninth Street in the 19th Century. A badly deteriorating garage is located on the south-east corner of the site. Lot is 66' x 137', a total of 9042 sq. ft.

PART III, SOURCES OF INFORMATION

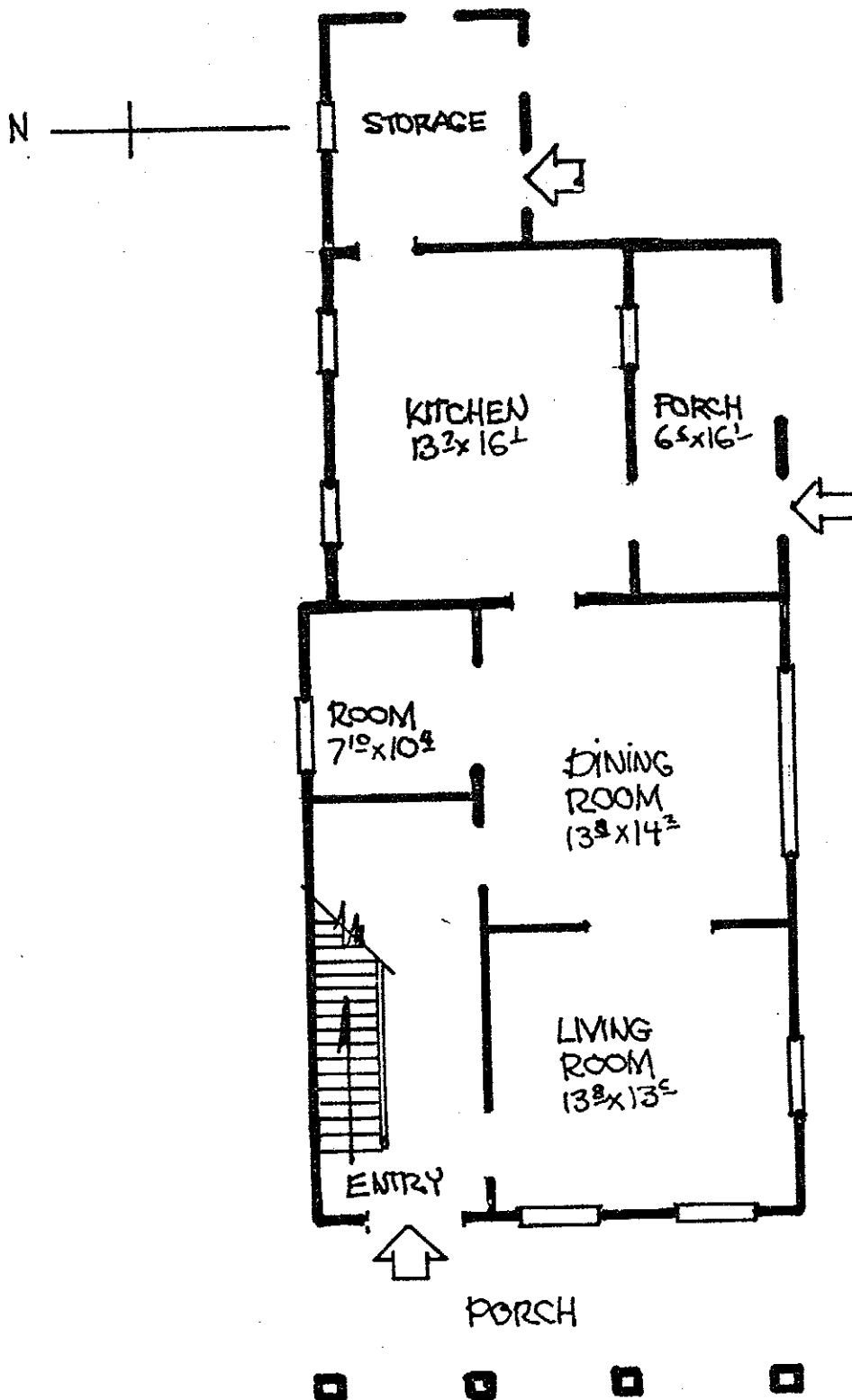
Bibliography:

Sanborne Map Co., Insurance Map of Des Moines, Iowa, 1920, Vol. I,  
p. 78.

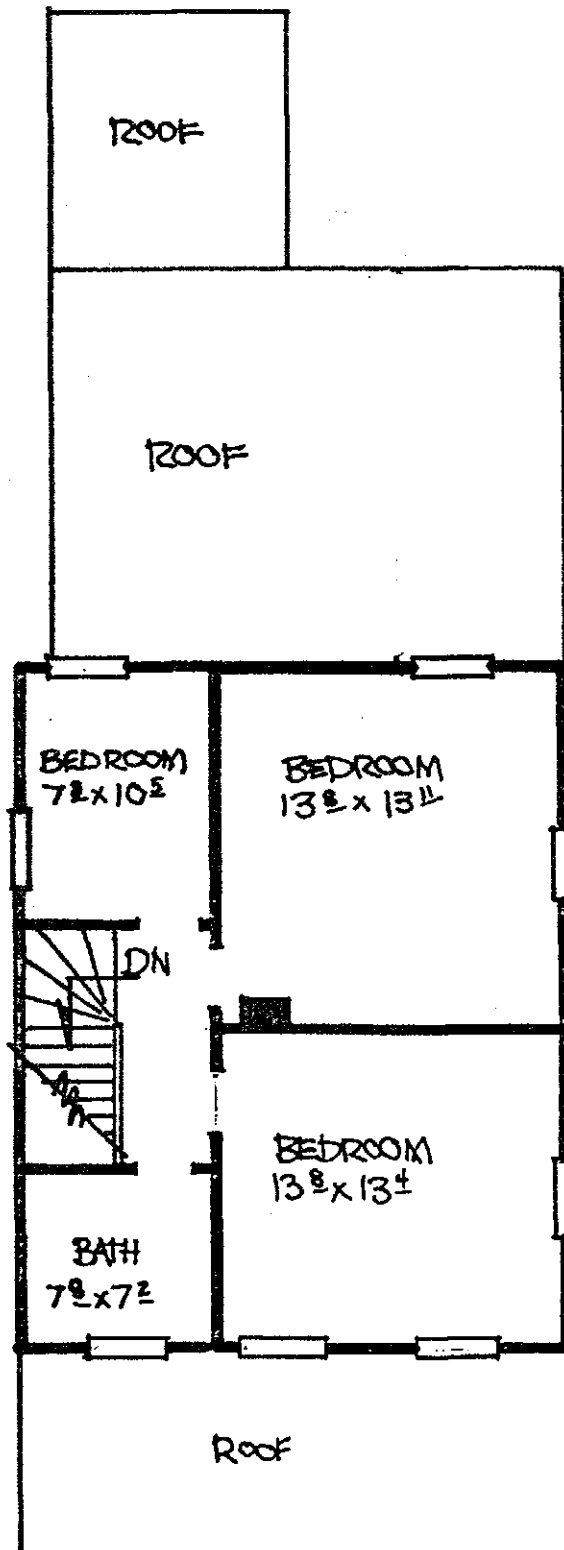
Prepared by: Virgil F. Stanford, Jr.  
Assistant Planner  
Des Moines Plan and  
Zoning Department  
November 3, 1981

PROJECT INFORMATION

The Cromer House is being removed as part of the Walnut Hill Redevelopment Project which is funded in part through the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Program. The plan was developed and is being implemented by the City of Des Moines, Iowa.



EXISTING FIRST FLOOR 1053-9TH D.S.M.



EXISTING SECOND FLOOR 1053-9TH DSM.